MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

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Psychiatric symptoms impact mental health court engagement

People living with mental illness are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. It is estimated that 1 million people with mental illnesses are arrested and booked in the U.S. each year. As such, interventions to help this population, such as mental health courts, are becoming popular in communities across the country. New research from the University of Missouri finds that for mental health courts to be successful, every professional engaged in the process should be aware of the relationship between psychiatric symptoms and participant engagement within the system and connect participants with comprehensive treatment and services as early as possible.

Mental health courts seek to address underlying problems that contribute to criminal behavior by linking criminal offenders who have mental illnesses to needed services and treatment. Mental health courts provide a voluntary option for criminal offenders that incorporates mental health assessments, treatment plans and ongoing monitoring to address the health needs of offenders in an effort to keep them out of jail, while also ensuring public safety.

"We know that mental health courts are able to provide tools to decrease criminal recidivism, however, little is really known about the factors that facilitate or impede participant success in such programs," said Kelli Canada, assistant professor in the School of Social Work. "With mental illness, people tend to think of the primary disorder at the exclusion of other symptoms that have yet to reach a diagnosable level. Those additional psychiatric symptoms can have a significant impact on a participant's success within mental health courts. For example, a participant with schizophrenia may have mild depressive symptoms that are not accounted for in the treatment plan. The depressive symptoms, not the psychosis, could cause them to sleep through a meeting with a probation officer."

Canada analyzed the relationship between psychiatric symptoms and mental health court engagement by looking at treatment adherence, substance use, days spent in jail, probation violations and retention during a six month follow up period. She found that symptoms of depression, anxiety and guilt were more severe for those participants incarcerated during their follow up period. The results speak to the importance of providing quality mental health and substance use treatment that addresses all of the participant's health needs.

"We found that for mental health courts to be the most successful, they must find a way to account for mental illness variation and incorporate this variation into treatment planning and decision making regarding the use of sanctions in order to support program engagement," Canada said. "We know
that for people dealing with substance abuse, slip-ups can occur. The same holds true for mental illness recovery. Recovery set-backs and psychiatric symptom exacerbation can impact a participant's engagement within the program; if that is not accounted for, it could and often does impact success."

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MU study shows a child's interaction with peers affects their health

Posted on 2 May 2016 at 6:21pm

Watch the story: [http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a31e3589-3e52-4e91-b9bd-d5dda33a779f](http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a31e3589-3e52-4e91-b9bd-d5dda33a779f)

COLUMBIA - In a 28-year study, researchers at MU found a child's social interactions affect their health.

"What we've been discovering is that a child's social world is in many ways the most important thing that's affecting their health," Mark Flinn, professor of biomedical anthropology, said. "What we have found is that the most important things in children's every day lives, that are resulting in elevations of stress, are social relationships."

The stress from these relationships affects their hormone levels and mental health on a daily basis.

In a news release, the research team said it determined children physically react to their social networks and the stress those networks could cause.

For the study, Flinn and Davide Ponzi, a post-doctoral fellow who is now with the University of Utah, collected data from a sample of 40 children ages 5 to 12 who lived in a small village on the east coast of Dominica, according to a news release.

"To measure stress we have been collecting saliva samples, and from the saliva samples we can measure levels of different chemicals or homones," Flinn said.

Flinn added that Ponzi found the interview with a child influenced their stress hormone levels as well as talking about the size of the social group around them.

"So children with not so great social networks had higher levels of cortisol (stress hormone) when they came for the interview," Flinn said.
Flinn said social networks include family members and friends that interact with the children on a daily basis.

"Our study was in line with past research on stress, loneliness and social support in adults, but we strengthened past research by applying it to children," Flinn said.

MISSOURIAN

CARL KENNEY: Chuck Henson and his thankless position

CARL KENNEY, 1 hr ago

It came as no surprise when it was announced that Chuck Henson is leaving his position as MU’s interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity. Next fall, Henson returns to his role as a professor at the School of Law.

It’s not clear if Henson resigned or was asked to leave. What is clear is the job brought with it the type of lingering headache that makes it difficult to focus.

Henson’s departure is more a reflection of the battles he faced than his ability to get the job done.

Henson lacked the backing of a black coalition.

“I have absolutely no confidence in Interim President Mike Middleton,” state Rep. Courtney Allen Curtis wrote in a statement released April 28. “He has over 30 years of experience at this university and has not given any true effort in implementing plans and has shown a history of a lack of action.”

The Democrat from Berkeley, who attended MU but didn’t graduate, advised black students not to enroll at MU. In an interview with the Riverfront Times, Curtis cited his grievances with MU dating back to his days as a black student leader.
Curtis wrote his statement in response to the approval of SCR 66, a resolution to establish a review commission for MU. His request to ensure minority representation on the commission failed.

“They could put all big Mizzou donors on there at the expense of minorities trying to make things better,” Curtis said.

He went on to say he’d like to see "acceptable minorities" chosen by the legislature's black caucus rather than "yes people."

Is Curtis asserting that Middleton and Henson are “yes people” assigned to uphold the ambitions of white people? If so, how does the criticism of blacks in leadership positions support the movement toward sustainable change?

Being labeled an “Uncle Tom” or a “Yes Man” or “Yes Woman” is a fear black people face. It’s hard enough enduring the hardship related to pressing an agenda aimed at elevating black people when opposed by white people who fail to understand.

It hurts when you’re attacked by black people who make demands while failing to consider the hardships faced by a person placed in Henson’s position.

The tension showed up in February when Henson wrote a letter to members of Concerned Student 1950 asking them to stop making demands. Henson told students that in a relationship there is no place for demands because there is no need for demands.

Henson indicated his invitation to meet members of the group face-to-face had not been accepted, and he and others were already working on most of the issues raised in their list of demands. He also acknowledged things that couldn’t be achieved due to state and federal laws.

In other words, don’t fight against the black man who is doing the best he can.

These are the type of problems black people face. Fighting for change is often complicated by the pressure to “keep it real.”
How do you move forward when black legislators attack the work of men like Middleton and Henson? What is achieved when students are praised for protest without being held accountable for their unwillingness to compromise?

Henson and Middleton are caught in the middle of conflicting agendas. State legislators want to punish MU for failing to keep students in line while some blacks in leadership demand immediate solutions to old problems.

Evonnia Woods is a graduate student MU. She is among a group of students who pushed for the hiring of Michael Middleton after Tim Wolfe resigned. Her thoughts reveal the frustration of students who disagreed with the decision to focus on ousting Tim Wolfe.

She posted this on Facebook on April 6:

“I’m still coming to terms with the fact that 11 students arose in the name of us all, garnered widespread attention as THE movement, while not allowing room for critique or alliance politics.

“It bothers me that after numerous student org leaders, all a part of a recently formed social justice collaborative, decided against their suggestion to target the system President, the advocates for that strategy branched off and not only pursued their personal agenda, but claimed to be pursuing it on behalf of all students — and to such extremes that student leaders have since been divided, polarized, and consumed by the stress of it all.”

Woods challenges the narrative of student protest at MU.

“I write this for every person who praises their coalition building; every person who praises them for being incredible student leaders — for being so inspirational … so brave; for every journalist who told and retold the story in which the Concerned arose from the ashes as heroes and called it ‘investigative journalism,’” Woods continues.
“For every campus and off campus supporter who continues to uplift them as a model for movement building and centers them in a narrative that minimizes the work of and further marginalizes the most marginalized students; for all of those who say they were or have been successful.”

How can one function within such tension?

Curtis and members of Concerned Students 1950 build upon a model of resistance that concentrates on the limits of black leaders.

Woods is asking the right questions. What has been gained? The loss of Henson is part of the answer.

You can’t succeed when the people you seek to help work against you.

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the maneater

Staff open forum addresses budget restraints, job security

Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward: “We’ve got a dark cloud right now over the institution. We can’t sugarcoat that.”

In a climate of budget constraints and staff unrest, a panel of seven MU administrators fielded questions and concerns from staff regarding job security, career paths and salaries during an open forum April 26, the first open forum for staff members since October.

MU is facing a projected freshman enrollment decline of 1,500 for the fall 2016 semester and a $32 million budget shortfall for the 2016–17 school year.

In addition to the cut, the UM System’s state funding will decrease by $3.8 million.
For staff, this means raises are unlikely. Staff members are nonacademic employees who work in administrative, service and operations positions, such as secretaries, supervisors and directors of organizations and departments on campus.

“We get significantly more of our general budget from the students’ tuition than we do from the state,” Vice Chancellor of Finance Rhonda Gibler said. “We are going to have a shortfall in our budget without giving raises.”

To tackle budget restraints, Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward said the administration is working on increasing revenue through using campus facilities to hold more events.

The Department of Student Affairs is looking to expand the section of The Mizzou Store that sells clothing and other items unaffiliated with MU, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs said. The department is also working to promote dining halls and on-campus living and parking.

**PROFESSOR ACTIVISM**

One staff member asked what protections are in place for staff who want to stand with protesting students but fear receiving negative press and losing their jobs.

Last fall, assistant communication professor Melissa Click was fired by the Board of Curators after a video of her surfaced calling for “muscle” to remove a reporter from the Concerned Student 1950 campsite. Assistant Director of Greek Life Janna Basler was also involved in an altercation with a student journalist in which she told him to leave. She was subsequently placed on administrative leave for a month.

The staff member said that staff have been told not to vocalize their solidarity.

“Students have been protesting and staff members have wanted to stand with their students, but have been continually told, ‘Stay in your seats,’” the staff member said. “Faculty have tenure, students are protected under certain free speeches, but in Missouri you can be fired without reason or if you support the wrong thing.”

Administrators tell another story.
“As you can tell from a lot of the things that have gone on, if you think it’s a clear line in terms of First Amendment rights, et cetera, it’s not,” interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resource Services Jatha Sadowski said. “I would say because I work in HR and the grievances and terminations come through my office, that the notion that when people speak up they are targeted is possibly exaggerated. I have not seen it.”

Sadowski said there are staff protections in terms of hourly nonexempt employees, progressive discipline, grievance and equity processes.

“I’ve been here 23 years,” Sadowski said. “I don’t say everything that I feel on every issue because I do think we try and support the organization or say it in a way that is productive.”

**MORALE AND SALARY CONCERNS**

In response to a staff member’s question about what Ward, as a leader, is doing to improve employee morale, Ward said his focus is honesty.

“We’ve got a dark cloud right now over the institution,” Ward said. “We can’t sugarcoat that. We’ve got some issues: budget issues, cultural issues — we’ve got some issues. What we’ve been trying to do in (the operations division) is to be very open and honest about those issues and try to communicate with our employees, very candidly, about current issues and future issues and what we are trying to do to address those issues.”

In further consideration of budget restraints, Chuck Henson, interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity, said that in his division, administrators are “being efficient in the use of resources that (they) understand are precious and scarce.”

Henson said the idea is to take advantage of existing structures and merge them together to create the division rather than extend resources to create an entirely new structure and jobs.

Staff members questioned former Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin’s $459,000 salary and immediate tenure in his new position. Despite stepping down from his chancellor position and taking on the role of director for research facility development, his salary remains unchanged even though the transition agreement he signed in November stated that his new position will pay him 75 percent of his current salary.
Sadowski said Loftin has been overseeing research, and his high salary is contractual from his previous role as chancellor.

Despite difficult financial times, Gibler said when MU hires people for high academic positions, the university must offer immediate tenure because those they are looking to hire usually have had it in their previous jobs and are unwilling to forgo it.

When asked about career opportunities for staff, Sadowski said the Human Resources Development Committee has published information on its website about available career paths. In June, the committee hopes to hold informational sessions throughout campus about those opportunities.

**Mizzou Hillel postpones student housing plan at downtown Columbia site**

Mizzou Hillel has put on hold its plans to work with Columbia-based Trittenbach Development to transform its current home at 1107 University Ave. into a building that would include student apartments.

Executive Director Jeanne Snodgrass said that because the organization’s needs are so tied to the University of Missouri’s academic year, she and her team wanted to make sure they were ready for the transition to a temporary space and then back to the ground floor of the new development once construction is complete.

“All together, the timeline of the academic year, the time needed for construction and the time it takes to go through the zoning process with the city … the decision was made just to take that pause, but we’re still moving forward with the project, still really excited about the possibilities,” Snodgrass said.

Hillel and Trittenbach had planned to open the building in August 2017. Now, Snodgrass said, work might begin next summer.
Hillel had asked the city to consider rezoning the property from residential to planned business district. No construction or demolition plans for the site are on file with the city.

The proposal called for a 275-bed apartment building geared toward college students and a new Jewish campus center on the ground floor, similar to the development Trittenbach is building at 225 S. Ninth St., where the original Shakespeare’s Pizza stood. The Columbia-based company is known for its projects at Discovery Park and Brookside student apartments in Columbia.

Hillel provides services for Jewish students at the University of Missouri and has been at the University Avenue site since 1947. In 1974, it became the rented home of the Congregation Beth Shalom until the congregation outgrew its home there and built Columbia’s first synagogue some 33 years later.

Development in Columbia, especially student housing downtown, is a contentious political issue. Columbia Mayor Brian Treece has proposed a six-month “administrative delay” on new student housing. Projects that have already submitted applications for building permits would be exempt. The ordinance establishing the freeze on new projects was on the agenda for a first reading at the city council’s Monday meeting.

The proposal defines a box around campus where projects could continue, and the Hillel project is in that box, Third Ward Councilman Karl Skala said Sunday on a Tribune podcast. However, the bill gives conflicting information about the boundaries of that zone, he said.

Trittenbach spokesman Jack Cardetti in an email wrote that the decision to postpone the Hillel development was made by Hillel, “in consultation and with the support of Trittenbach. The proposed administrative delay was not a factor in the decision.”

Trittenbach submitted building plans to the city last week for another downtown project — a six-story, 261-bed student apartment building at Sixth and Elm streets. The apartments would be part of the company’s Brookside brand of student housing.

Construction plans are mostly for one- and three-bedroom apartment units. Indoor parking would be on the basement floor.

The developer hopes for the project to be completed by July 2017.
Columbia city council discusses housing freeze proposal for downtown

The Columbia City Council first read a proposal Monday night to put a freeze on building multi-unit housing in a one-mile radius of the University of Missouri campus.

If approved, the bill would establish an administrative delay on the processing of applications for a building permit for developments within the area bounded by Elm Street, Providence Road, Stadium Boulevard and College Avenue.

New mayor Brian Treece has long criticized the boom in housing downtown. Since Treece's time on the Downtown Leadership Council, he's asked for more clarity on how downtown Columbia's old utilities can handle the hundreds of new people living there.

Treece said he wanted to see a "freeze" in demolition permits also added to the bill before the council takes it up for a vote.

The bill cites the downturn in the university's enrollment for next school year.

It says that the "unique design" of buildings, like the ones planned for the old Quinton's Bar and Deli site and the former Shakespeare's downtown spot, are built almost exclusively for students, and won't likely be re-purposed for other housing.

The council can take this up for a vote as early as May 16.

Details emerge for new Brookside building downtown

On Wednesday, engineers working for Trittenbach Development submitted plans for a new Brookside development near the University of Missouri campus at Sixth and Elm streets.
Plans for the former site of Bengals Bar and Grill and Casablanca call for a six-story, 261-bed apartment building. The plans indicate all six floors would be for apartments and suggest the building would be similar in architecture to past Brookside developments downtown.

The project does not list an official name for the development other than "New Apartment Project," but Trittenbach spokesman Jack Cardetti said the building would be part of the Brookside apartment chain.

Construction plans are mostly for one- and three-bedroom apartment units, but the project includes up to four-bedroom units. The basement floor of the development would house indoor parking, including 66 parking spaces, two motorcycle parking spaces and a bike storage room.

The proposal also calls for a courtyard on the first floor and a study room. The developer is aiming for the project to be completed by July 2017.

The project's infrastructure needs would be served by city services, with a sanitary sewer connection on Fifth Street. The sanitary sewer line on Fifth Street travels south and connects to what will be a larger sewer pipe on Elm Street.

The pipe on Elm Street is scheduled to be enlarged as part of the Flat Branch Watershed Relief Sewer Project 3.

**MU Alert: Fire alarms set off due to power spike**

Fire alarms throughout the University of Missouri’s campus in Columbia reportedly went off unintentionally Monday evening after a power spike.

MU Alert put out a tweet saying everyone is safe and officials are working on the problem as of 9:00 p.m.
TARGET 8: Missouri hospitals lack regulations on end-of-life care

COLUMBIA - Simon Crosier's parents said they were never told about key decision in their son's care before he died in the same hospital he was born just three months earlier.

It happened at St. John's Mercy Medical Center, which is now Mercy Hospital St. Louis, where Simon was born on September 7, 2010.

It was not until three weeks after Simon's death that Scott and Sheryl Crosier were able to look through their son's medical file and discovered the words "Do Not Resuscitate" - an order they said they had not approved or even been informed about.

When they dug further, they found Simon had been put on 'comfort feeds' in the placement of nutrition and water. Crosier said a doctor told her that comfort feeds only serve the purpose of keeping a baby from crying through the night; they do not supply any essential nutrients. The Crosiers said they did not give permission for this either; they were not even notified.

Simon's story
The Crosiers discovered their son Simon would be born with a condition called Trisomy 18 when they saw his clenched fists and cleft lip during their 20-week ultrasound visit.

Trisomy 18 is a rare condition that causes delays in development due to an extra chromosome.

The couple was approached about possibly doing tests to decide whether they wanted to terminate the pregnancy.
"We said 'no, we're not going to. This is our child. We don't care what he has. Termination is not an option for us,'" Sheryl Crosier said.

After Simon died, the Crosiers began reflecting on their experience with the hospital and digging deeper into the issue of end-of-life care, especially with cases involving babies born with genetic disorders.

Scott Crosier said every time he and his wife asked about different treatment options for helping their son, "I don't know" was the usual response.

"We were later told by a doctor, while we were in grief counseling, that doctors should never say they don't know," Crosier said. "He said, even if they don't know the answer, they should be able to get it for you in 24 hours."

**What is a futility policy?**

The couple was connected with Dr. Daun Allison, a physician in Bend, Oregon, who used to work at University Hospital in Columbia.

Allison walked the couple through the medical jargon in Simon's files and introduced them to the term "futility policy".

A futility policy is standard protocol for a hospital staff when there is a patient whose condition is deemed futile, or without cure. These policies include issuing "Do Not Resuscitate" orders, known as DNRs, and withholding care.

There are currently no laws in Missouri that regulate these policies or even require hospitals to disclose it to patients.

This means all 165 hospitals in the state have separate procedures, with the exception of hospital groups that hold the same policy for each of their locations.

Also, these policies are not considered public information. The only way to find out if a hospital has one is to ask, and hope they will tell you what it is.

**Where are these policies?**

Target 8 reached out to dozens of hospitals throughout the state. Most of the hospitals were unwilling to state more than whether or not they had a policy, some did not even provide that.

Boone Hospital Center in Columbia was the only facility to offer its policy and defend it.
Boone Hospital Center's supportive care program coordinator, Dorreen Rardin, said the center stresses on-going communication with families through these types of cases. She said she does her best to inform parents about how nutrients and resuscitation often won't help the patient and can sometimes lead to more problems. However, even if a family is not convinced, the center's physicians have the last say.

"If there's a case where the physician really believes that what they're doing is futile, and the child is going to die no matter what we do for it, there is a policy," Rardin said. "If two physicians state that this is futile care, they do not have to provide the care. They would communicate that with the family, and the family could then get another physician."

Rardin said someone would have to ask about the policy if they want to know what it is, but she discusses it openly with the families she works with. Rardin said she believes many hospitals in the state are transparent with these policies if they are asked but attributes Boone Hospital Center's particular care with these issues to its ethics committee.

**When KOMU 8 News initially reached out to University Hospital, a doctor whose profile states he specializes in end-of-life care said he did not know whether the hospital has a futility policy. When KOMU 8 reached out a second time, a representative from the hospital said it does.**

Other mid-Missouri hospitals with futility policies include Fulton Medical Center and SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital in Jefferson City.

Mid-Missouri hospitals without futility policies include Hermann Area District Hospital and Lake Regional Hospital in Osage Beach.

Allison said this issue does not only affect children with genetic disorders, but anyone who is hospitalized. However, she said patients suffering from futile conditions are most at risk.

"Let's say someone has diabetes," Allison said. "There is no cure for diabetes, so it is technically considered a futile condition. If someone has diabetes and is hospitalized with pneumonia, doctors could technically withhold care and issue a DNR for that patient because antibiotics and nutrients won't cure diabetes."

Allison said this example is unlikely to happen but creates a clear image for what happens to some children with genetic disorders.
"[The victims] may have had an incurable illness, but not receiving food and water will kill you too," Allison said.

What's next?
While the Crosiers said they do not blame the hospital for the death of their son, they do believe the staff's actions quickened it.

Sheryl Crosier is making it her mission to spread her story to various communities of parents, medical personnel and legislators in an effort to create new legislation to protect families from this issue by requiring transparency with futility policies.

"I cannot bring my son back," Sheryl Crosier said. "But I want people to be aware and start asking important questions that could save a child's life."

University of Missouri student engineers present 2016 model racer

Don’t call the Mizzou Racing team’s Formula SAE car a go-kart, sophomore Ryan Minick said Sunday as the team unveiled the vehicle before a four-day competition in Michigan.

The 600 cubic centimeters Honda engine, mounted in a chassis with a center of gravity less than 8 inches off the ground, will drown out those kind of snarky remarks for driver and spectators alike, he said.

“When you see it driving, it looks really fast,” Minick said. “When you get in and actually drive, it is unlike anything you have ever driven. It is not a go-kart, it’s a race car. … That is something people find out when they go out to our drive day and actually hear it run.”

The 20-member team of mainly engineering students presented its new car with a white, black and gold livery during an event at Lafferre Hall on the University of Missouri campus.

The vehicle is 30 pounds lighter, 1½ inches wider and — its designers hope — faster than the car that came in 29th out of 110 competitors at Michigan International Speedway in 2015.
The car also traveled to Australia in December, where it came in sixth in a field of 30 competitors.

For this year’s competition, from May 11-14, 138 teams from the United States and seven foreign countries are entered. Teams score points for cost, design, fuel efficiency, speed, endurance and handling.

At the pinnacle of racing, the engine of a Formula One car can cost $10 million or more as part of a team budget that easily can exceed $300 million. On a far smaller budget, Formula SAE teams since 1981 have competed for the best solution for a production racer marketed to amateur enthusiasts, according to the website for SAE International, the professional society for automotive engineers.

“Each student team designs, builds and tests a prototype based on a series of rules whose purpose is both to ensure onsite event operations and promote clever problem solving,” the website states.

The Mizzou Racing team first competed in 1987, and its $12,000 budget is supported by Boeing and Norfolk-Southern, among others, through the College of Engineering’s Corporate Partner’s Program, said Alyssa Black, chief business officer and one of the few team members who are not engineering students.

Some of the teams from Europe, where F1 races draw 100,000 to 150,000 fans, can generate wild enthusiasm, said Black, a senior at MU studying business administration. The crowd Sunday of about 80 people, including many parents and local sponsors, was a satisfying turnout, she said.

“If I have 100 people at our unveiling, I’d be ecstatic,” Black said. “If they had 100 people, they would say nobody came.”

In driving tests, the car will go from zero to 60 mph in 3.5 seconds and put stress of 2 Gs on the driver in corners, chief design engineer and team leader Rory Hourihan said. In the competition, the car will be tested on how well it performs a figure eight, runs an acceleration test and simulates qualifying and racing with one- and 22-lap runs through a winding course, he said.

Driver Nate Conrad said he had a scary moment on the track in Australia.

“On the first lap of the endurance run, I spun out and couldn’t get the car restarted,” he said. “I was facing the wrong way, and there was another car coming right at me.”

Mizzou Racing team members said they received invaluable help machining parts and getting advice from Kays Engineering and Performance Motorsports Design, owned by brothers Ed Kays and Jim Kays, respectively, of Marshall.
“It’s great being with smart kids,” Jim Kays said. “They stump me all the time.”

One Campus, Two Student Governments
Frustrated by what they view as the system’s lack of commitment to addressing their concerns, minority students at the University of Kansas are forming a parallel student government.

No MU Mention

A common complaint among minority students participating in campus protests in the past year has been a lack of representation in their student governments. Last month, students at the University of Kansas came up with a possible solution: create a separate government to represent students of color.

The move has drawn criticism from those who argue a parallel government is a form of segregation and that students would be better off seeking election to student government. The move has also drawn praise from researchers who study race on college campuses and from activists who say minority students are frequently shut out of student government.

Shaun Harper, executive director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, said while few -- if any -- other institutions have separate governments for minority students, the concept of creating a new structure specifically for minority students on campus is not new.

“Historically black fraternities were born out of this same sense of exclusion,” Harper said. “That’s true for ethnic cultural centers, too. We wouldn’t need them on campuses if the campuses themselves were much more culturally inclusive of students of color. These students are not trying to just segregate themselves. That is not their motive. They’re just tired of waiting for this larger, longstanding structure to be responsive.”

Those behind the creation of the new Multicultural Student Government at Kansas say the change is necessary after years of neglect and discrimination. Inaction on those issues, including concerns that the government’s election code was biased against low-income students after the Senate raised the spending cap for candidates, led to an intense meeting between activists and the student government, the Student Senate, in November. The meeting ended with the Student Executive Committee asking that the
senate’s president, vice president and chief of staff -- who, along with most of the executive branch, are white -- resign over what was seen as a lack of support for minority students.

At the same meeting, the Student Senate Rights Committee passed a resolution in support of a list of demands created by student demonstrators. That list included the creation of a parallel student government for marginalized students. The president, vice president and chief of staff later said they would not resign, releasing a statement in support of minority students.

“Black lives matter,” they wrote. “Black lives matter at the University of Kansas.” Last month, the senate formally approved of the new Multicultural Student Government, though many details of how it will function and work in tandem with the original Student Senate are still being worked out. At the moment, the Multicultural Student Government functions ostensibly as a student club, albeit one with a far larger budget than other student organizations on campus. Its funding will come from the Student Senate’s budget.

The University Senate Code only allows for three governing bodies on campus: the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate and the Student Senate. Altering the code to officially allow for a fourth governing body could take several semesters.

Butch Oxendine, executive director of the American Student Government Association, said he’s never heard of a campus operating two parallel student governments and questions whether such an arrangement could work.

“They’re very passionate about not being represented, and I totally understand that,” Oxendine said. “But I don’t know that this is the way to get what they want. To me, this hearkens back to separation and Jim Crow days. It’s going backwards in time, not moving forward. I don’t see any assurance that a smaller, separate government would have any influence over the existing body. Why not work within the system and then try to get the current government to evolve and change?”

Researchers like Harper and Eddie Comeaux, an associate professor of higher education at the University of California at Riverside, however, said many minority students have already tried working within that system, and feel that it’s a structure that refuses to respond to their concerns no matter their attempts. Students have long claimed that student governments and their elections are biased against minority students, instead favoring white students and members of fraternities and sororities.
Earlier this year, a student at the University of Florida -- a former chief strategist for a prominent student government party -- posted a video online that quickly went viral, in which she criticized the student government there as being rigged against minority students. The student, Sabrina Phillips, explained how a coalition of Greek chapters collude to choose who should run for open positions and then pressure chapter members into voting a certain way.

“No one that’s a part of this system can change it from the inside,” Phillips warned. The predominantly white Greek chapters are divided into three powerful voting blocs, she said, while non-Greeks typically run as independents. The three Greek-led blocs, which do sometimes feature a handful of students of color agreeing to run for lower-level positions, come together to vote as one during elections, using their 2,500 votes to overpower any independent slates.

The former strategist’s claims were an open secret of sorts at Florida. The coalition of predominantly white, fraternity-led voting blocs, which students at Florida liken to a shadow government, is known as “the System.” It has operated on campus since the 1960s.

In 2010, leaked recordings of a meeting with one prominent party revealed that some fraternities and sororities withheld dinner from their members until they voted for the preferred candidates. “You guys cannot let the Greek system down,” a voice said on the tapes. “This is what we live for. This is what we pledge. Everything about it is why we run this campus and why we have been for the last century.”

In 2008, the private emails of top Florida student government officials were leaked, including a list of students who applied for open government positions. Twelve names were highlighted in green. “Green means go,” the student president wrote. Ten of the 12 names won seats in the government that election.

A similar shadow government exists at the University of Alabama, known as “the Machine.” A brochure published by the group in 1989 noted that in the Student Government Association’s 75-year existence, the Machine successfully elected its choice for president 68 times. “This is because the SGA is ours,” the brochure reads.

“When inequities are made to be institutionalized, it’s so much harder to disrupt them,” said Demetri Morgan, a University of Florida graduate who is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. “It takes a couple of years to learn about the system, and then when you get to a point where you can and want to do something, your time there is almost up. The system keeps going, but the people who want to disrupt it are only on campus for a finite about of time. The system always outlasts them.”
A group of minority student activists at the University of Wisconsin at Madison hope to be an exception to the rule. Coming from several organizations on campus -- including the UW Blackout Movement, the Wisconsin Black Student Union and Students for Justice in Palestine -- 23 students created a new slate this year called the Blind Side. Piggybacking off their activism and the attention their protests received last year, 17 of the students were able to win positions on the Associated Students of Madison Student Council. That’s a majority of council’s open positions. The slate nabbed two of the three open seats on the Student Services Finance Committee, the body that allocates $45 million in student fees per year.

Voter turnout increased by 53 percent over last year, Associated Students of Madison said in a statement.

“I think on one end you can try taking the traditional route of running for office and serving in that leadership role, having a voice where you can effect change,” Comeaux said. “But I don’t think students necessarily have to be confined to that traditional route. Every now and then you have to take alternative routes that might be more effective for addressing your cause on your particular campus.”